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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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FROM ATTIC TO MUSEUM

Four walls do not a prison make - nor do they make a Museum. More important than the mortar, stone and glass of its fabric are the thousands of items stored in its collections. With these it serves its community. What does the Museum do for you? It performs many diverse jobs - gathers and preserves examples of the work of man and the products of nature. These are arranged and studied. From them come popular and scientific publications; exhibits for the student and casual visitor. The Museum serves not only as a storehouse of specimens but also of classified information concerning things within its scope. It is a free public consultant for the newspaper man, scientist, artist, teacher, industrialist, schoolboy, in fact anyone with a question on his lips.

What are you doing for the Museum? Contributing materials and information. From one person comes a collection of foreign shells bearing labels as to their origin; from another,a fine piece of furniture, silver,glass or china, each of which tells a story of man's art and artisanship. Many persons supply information about the changes in numbers or ranges of animals. A mine forwards a sample of its ore. Some one presents back copies of such magazines as "The Connoisseur,"or "The Studio" or "Rod and Gun." From a gravel pit or excavation comes the antler of a deer long since extinct, or a rock bearing small delicate fossils. Gifts from the Ontario public are certainly diverse; many are of great interest. Since this is house-cleaning time and the A.R.P. experts advise cleaning out the attic, remember your Museum. Perhaps grandmother's costume, a quaint, old-fashioned valentine or a stuffed passenger pigeon will be found. Send them to your Museum. The rule of give and take holds true for both the Museum and you.

ALUMINUM FOR WAR OR PEACE

Planes need aluminum. This is so important that it is necessary to strictly limit its use for domestic purposes. Yet this metal is found everywhere, according to Dr. E.S. Moore of the Royal Ontario Museum. According to this authority it occurs in clay,shale and felspar which are ubiquitous materials. But there are just two materials from which it can be obtained on a commercial basis. These are cryolite, the first source, and bauxite. Cryolite known as "ice-stone" because of its frosty appearance, is mined only in Greenland and even there in small quantities. Bauxite has largely supplanted cryolite because it is more widely spread and occurs in larger quantities. In order to obtain the aluminum from this ore large quantities of electricity are needed. This is why Canada has become a great producer of the metal in spite of the fact that she lacks the ore. Samples of bauxite may be seen at the Royal Ontario Museum.

SPRING IN THE 1860's

Time marches on. But inside the Royal Ontario Museum we try to look back and crystallize some of the moments that have passed. Take for example the Passenger Pigeon Group. Its label reads, "A morning in mid-April in the 1860's; southern aspect near the Forks of the Credit." Here a by-gone day is re-created for the eye. Though the year's "sugaring" is over sap still drips from a hand-made spigot set in a maple tree. On the ground hepatica and bloodroot are in bloom and the spear-like leaves of the dog-tooth violet are up. In the shadow of the tree the last trace of winter's snow lingers. Everywhere there are passenger pigeons. One sits on the rim of the sap bucket. Some have settled in the trees; still more on the ground, while in the background one can see clouded millions of pigeons looming over the escarpment.

In 1914 the last of all the passenger pigeons died in the Cincinnati Zoo. The bird is but a memory. That is not quite true. Due largely to the energy and perspicacity of Mr. Paul Hahn, the Royal Ontario Museum has been able to preserve study specimens of this pigeon, to save, in fact, the single largest collection in existence.

To return to the exhibit,--here through the artistry of L.L. Snyder, Roy Fisher and T.M. Shortt, the Royal Ontario Museum shows you a day 80 years ago. Then the passenger pigeon was unbelievably abundant. But time marches on, carrying some and dropping others.

HUNTING IN THE DARK

Did you ever go hunting in the dark? It can be very fascinating if the right equipment is used. All light is not visible,and some of the invisible light is called ultra-violet. There are certain minerals which react to this invisible ultra-violet light and become visible in the midst of their dark surroundings. This phenomenon is called fluorescence. Different minerals, and in fact different specimens of the same mineral,, often react differently and display different colours.

In the Royal Ontario Museum there is an interesting exhibit of fluorescent minerals under ultra-violet light. By pressing a button the same specimens may be seen under ordinary light.

This peculiar characteristic of certain minerals is of increasing practical importance. At the present time tungsten is an essential war metal, but one of its chief sources, scheelite, is a mineral rather difficult to identify. Under ultra-violet light,however,its pale blue fluorescence is striking. So now the hunt is on. Men shine the invisible light of the ultra-violet lamps in the dark of underground mine-workings and after nightfall in remote camps, searching for the ghostly glow of this important mineral.